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Ministry of Education

SECOND AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE ABORIGINAL STUDENT SUCCESS

COMOX – Stan Hagen, Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts and Comox Valley MLA, joined with Aboriginal leaders and Comox Valley school district representatives today to sign the district's second Aboriginal education enhancement agreement to help improve Aboriginal student achievement.

"The Comox Valley school district has been working hard to improve achievement levels for its Aboriginal students," said Hagen. "Today's agreement will build on that hard work and will help Comox Valley Aboriginal students achieve their best. All the partners deserve congratulations for this historic agreement."

Local Aboriginal communities, the Ministry of Education and the school district worked closely to develop several strategies to help improve student achievement in this second agreement, which include:

- Increasing the involvement of Aboriginal families, community and elders;
- Expanding Early Intervention services, including All-Day Aboriginal Kindergarten programs;
- Increasing the number of Aboriginal administrators, teachers and support staff within the school district; and
- Enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal students for leadership programs, and work experience opportunities within Aboriginal agencies.

"This agreement is important because it helps ensure Aboriginal communities have a voice in the education of Aboriginal students," said Education Minister Shirley Bond. "One of the Province's goals is to improve Aboriginal student achievement, and this agreement will help accomplish that by clearly setting out how the district and Aboriginal communities will work together to improve results for Aboriginal students."

There are 886 Aboriginal students in the Comox Valley school district this year. The district serves the K'ómoks First Nation and the North Island Metis Association.

"This second enhancement agreement is for all the students of the Comox Valley, but in particular for the Aboriginal students so that they can succeed in school and in the world beyond," sad Fran Prince, chair of the Aboriginal Education Committee. "We know that every student will benefit from the increased understanding and respect it provides for Aboriginal culture."

Thirty-six B.C. school districts have signed Aboriginal education enhancement agreements to date. These agreements support the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda to build a new relationship with First Nations, and to close gaps in education and economic opportunities.

School districts have seen encouraging results following the signing of an education enhancement agreement. For example, in the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows district, Grade 7 Aboriginal reading and writing results on the Foundation Skills Assessment improved by 20 per cent. In the Cowichan Valley school district, Aboriginal school completion rates increased from 25 per cent in 2001 to 35 per cent in 2006.

The agreements are one component of the Province's strategy to improve Aboriginal student achievement. Others include the new First Nations education jurisdiction agreement and the development of Aboriginal content for K-12 curriculum.

The Province is investing an estimated $51.1 million a year – $1,014 per student – for Aboriginal education in 2007-08. The funds are used to support Aboriginal language and culture programs, Aboriginal support service programs, and other localized Aboriginal education programs.

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